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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 001641

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/RSA AND A/S CARSON

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TFG TROOPS UNDERGO BASIC TRAINING IN
DJIBOUTI

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson. Reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On July 24, Somalia Unit Poloff visited Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) soldiers in training at an army camp in Djibouti. The Djiboutians had adequately housed, fed and uniformed the troops, who were engaging in well-organized close-order drill after four weeks at the camp. Weapons training was scheduled to begin July 26. The Djiboutian trainers were identifying and nurturing promising leaders from among the trainees. Poloff urged that the Djiboutians continue leadership development and hone Somalis' urban warfare skills before training concludes at the end of August. Random conversations with the trainees suggest that many are Hawiye from the Hiraan region and from Mogadishu. Embassy Djibouti and Somalia Unit will continue to monitor the training, and work with the TFG to prepare the recruits' return to Mogadishu. End summary.

¶2. (C) On July 24, Somalia Unit Poloff visited the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) soldier trainees at their basic training camp near the town of Hol Hol, approximately 45 kilometers outside Djibouti City. The TFG soldiers are training on the grounds of the Djiboutian army camp, with instruction provided by Djiboutian army trainers. With assistance from Embassy Djibouti, we met with Djiboutian training camp commander Colonel A. M. Tahir, and his staff.

¶3. (C) Colonel Tahir said that about 460 Somali trainees are at the camp. Tahir escorted us to the Somali encampment, which included newly-constructed pit latrines, showers, potable water tanks, and tents and cots given by the USG to Djibouti for use at the camp. TFG trainees use the Djiboutian military camp's infirmary and other permanent facilities. All trainees were wearing new camouflage battle dress uniforms, and khaki caps. Most, but not all, wore leather combat boots. (The rest wore sandals.)

¶4. (C) At a parade ground adjacent to the camp, Poloff witnessed the Somali trainees energetically practicing close-order drill without weapons. Individual Somali trainees led some of the drills. Tahir told us the Djiboutian instructors had placed certain trainees in charge of some drills in order to test their leadership potential. Promising leaders may receive further leadership training, the Colonel said. Target practice with AK-47s was to begin at a nearby firing range on July 26, according to Colonel Tahir, and practice with other weapons common in Somalia would follow. Recalling past discussions with veteran Somali soldiers, Poloff stressed to the Djiboutians the importance of leadership development and urban warfare training. Colonel Tahir took note and said this would feature

prominently before training ended in late August.

¶4. (C) Colonel Tahir said the trainees had undergone a thorough registration and medical exam when they arrived in Djibouti more than three weeks ago. Some trainees were slightly undernourished when they arrived, but that in general the Somalis were fit and energetic, he said. Tahir reported no discipline problems, and said that the Djiboutian army instructors had successfully dealt with the few minor issues that had occurred through extra physical and military training, which deterred future problems.

¶5. (C) Poloff spoke separately with three of the trainees about their backgrounds. They were in their late teens or twenties, and were in good spirits. The oldest was from Hiraan Region (Hawiye/Hawadle), and had been in the Somali army for "many years" he said. Since he was among the older trainees and had been in the military, the Djiboutian instructors had designated him as a trainee leader.

¶6. (C) Two other trainees were Hawiye/Abgals from the Karaan District of Mogadishu. They said there were many Hawadle and Abgal in their battalion. A smaller number were Bay and Bakool Region Rahanweyne. While one had never fired a gun before, the other trainee had been part of a 60-strong Karaan Abgal militia before his militia leader gave him the option of joining the battalion. He said only two of his militia had joined this training, but other pro-TFG militias were represented among the trainees. Both told us they were committed to fighting al-Shabaab. Although Shabaab were Somalis, they said, everything they brought to Somalia was

NAIROBI 00001641 002 OF 002

from the outside: money, weapons, fighters and foreign Islamic beliefs.

¶7. (C) Comment: We saw a great deal of activity during our trip to the trainees' camp, from trainees exercising, to fast-paced close-order drills. If the Djiboutian instructors can develop leaders from among the trainees, and give the Somalis some urban warfare training, they may have an advantage over what many describe as their ragtag violent Islamist opponents. With the assistance of Embassy Djibouti, we will continue to interact with these troops, to better gauge the strength of their commitment, and to assess the clans and regional make-up of the troops. We will also urge the TFG to prepare for these troops' return to Mogadishu. End Comment.

¶8. (U) Embassy Djibouti has cleared this message.
SLUTZ